

*Construction file
(cont'd)*

Relief for the long-suffering

"This is the most remarkable thing I've ever seen," said one New Jersey bus commuter as he zipped into New York City last week on a newly opened 2.5-mile exclusive bus lane (see p. 11). "The most brilliant traffic engineering ever," said another.

Passengers laughed and pointed at auto commuters inching along. ("If this doesn't get them out of their cars, nothing will.") Or, they just sat back and celebrated life. It was a humanizing experience for 35,000 bus commuters. It was what commuting should be.

The project required little more than the \$500,000 federal grant it received. And there's more where that came from. Let's stop dreaming and go after all the other commuter bottlenecks across the country.

How broad the concept?

Multidisciplinary design concept teams have sprung into being to try to meet critics of urban expressway construction by weaving highway routes into communities and fostering collateral development (ENR 12/17 p. 21).

As the programs they produced begin to move toward construction, discussion focuses on the structure and management of the teams themselves. Those are legitimate subjects of debate, but they miss the basic point. Regardless of the merits of teams involved in the two major efforts, in Baltimore and Chicago, their programs may fall flat because the cities do not have the money for proposed joint development of schools and housing.

Concept teams are not intended to ease the tasks of designers and planners. In fact, their work is made more rigorous. Instead, teams should ease political decision-making and channel commitment of resources.

New York City scrapped a proposed team that was to develop a linear city in conjunction with an expressway across Brooklyn. City officials acknowledged that because of widespread objections and financial limitations the project just would not be built in the foreseeable future. No matter how grand the idea is, officials were realistic in not undertaking an expensive study until they can commit themselves to the concept it may produce.

Massachusetts held up a team study of Boston's long-delayed inner belt expressway until it determined exactly what the scope of the concept study should be. Apparently at the last moment, officials who will make the final decisions realized they didn't really know what they were aiming for. Another frustrating delay, but a wise one under the circumstances.

Approvals still must come from the political realm, which includes appointed highway officials. No amount of good planning and design can bail out the man on the spot or excuse his failure to seek the nec-

The new game plan

"There is no painless way of getting rid of the injustices . . . that normally accompany inflation," said Arthur Burns earlier this month. The chairman of the Federal Reserve Board went on to list some of the things that will have to be done—specifically in construction—if business and labor do not exercise voluntary restraint (ENR 12/10 p. 11).

Some say that in suggesting expanded federal training programs, suspension of the Davis-Bacon Act, and creation of a national building code, Burns voiced some unspoken specifics President Nixon had in mind in his speech to the National Association of Manufacturers, where he hit hard on construction as an industry that has "something basically wrong with (its) bargaining process."

But the facts of the matter are that business and labor will not exercise restraint voluntarily, and the Burns list of "or elses" doesn't stand politically a chance of enactment or execution—unless the power of the presidency is put behind them. A Washington rumor that the President might convene construction's labor and management leaders (see p. 8) is enough to raise hopes for long-overdue action.

The Administration's new game plan calls for expansion without inflation in late 1971. Inasmuch as construction is historically the industry the federal government (unfortunately) turns to for quick expansion or contraction of the economy, it should be the first industry in which to control inflation.

The new game plan will require legislative and executive controls early in 1971 on inflationary practices in construction, followed by expanded federal spending and stimulation for construction late in 1971. Is that too much of a dream?

Visions of sugar plums—if that's your bag

Take another long look at this week's cover of ENGINEERING NEWS-RECORD—and think about it.

Think Christmas, carols, home and friends.

Think skaters, shoppers, smiles and laughter.

Think gaiety, girl-watching, Rockettes and Rolls-Royces.

Think mink, think pink, think snow, think skis.

Think color, beauty, art, architecture.

Think buildings, grandeur, man-made and marvelous.

Think greatness, gratitude, opportunity and challenge.

Think values and goals, what matters, what doesn't.

Think profits and purpose, of means and of ends.

Think kindly of '70 and hopefully of '71.

Think fun, frantic holiday fun.

Think rest, relaxation and sun.

Think Christmas.